THE MAILED FIST OF THE MIKADO

By FRANK G. CARPENTER

A CHAT WITH GEN. HASEGAWA, THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE JAPANESE ARMY IN KOREA, AS TO THE SITUATION.

He Speaks of Korean Rebels and Bandits—Talks of Russia and the United States, and Tells Where a Soldier Should Die—A Visit to Yong-san, the Tokio of Korea—A Military City Being Built by the Japanese—The New Barracks Which Cover Acres—The General's Palace and the Railroad Headquarters—A Wonderful Town Which is Growing Up Outside Seoul.

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SEOUL, 1909.

Have you ever heard of Yong-san? It is a great city in its beginning. Thousands of workmen are now building it and the structures being erected will, when completed, cost millions. It has one palatial residence which will be finer than any other building in the far east, outside of that of the Crown Prince of Japan. It will cost 500,000 yen, and it could not be built for that many dollars on United States soil. This will be the home of the commander-in-chief of the Japanese army in Korea, and it will be equipped for grand entertainments of every description. It will have fifty-six rooms. Its dining tables will seat three hundred guests at one time and its dancing hall will accommodate a crowd of nine hundred. Yong-san is to be the military capital of Korea, and adjoining it is a large territory which will be devoted to the railway officials and other such men. Altogether, the settlement will form the nucleus of a great Japanese city, which will extend toward and embrace Seoul, which is now the two miles away.

The Tokyo of Korea.

It was to see Yong-san and to have an interview with Gen. Hasegawa, the commander-in-chief of the Japanese forces in Korea, that I rode in company with Mr. Takouma Kourada out from Seoul in my jinriksha this afternoon. Our way was through the wide street which leads to the gate known as Nandaimon, a mighty structure of stone; with two heavy roofs of black tile, one above the other, each decorated with demons. The crowd was thick all the way to the gate, and there we had to turn and make way around at the side, the gate being now too small to accommodate the traffic. The wall of Seoul, which extends clear around the city, and which, until lately, was closed every night by great doors plated with iron, has had to be cut at this point, and two wide roads made at each side. These go right through the wall, and the gate itself has been built about with granite so that it stands there as a beautiful monument. It has gorgeous electric lamps at each entrance, both in and outside the city, and it is a fit mark of the union of the past and the present.

A few years ago the only buildings beyond this gate were scattered thatched huts hugging the wall. Now, the wide road which has been made from there to the River Han is lined for a mile with Japanese and Korean buildings, and there are many foreign structures as well. The Korean electric street car line, belonging to an American firm, has a regular service, which takes one to the Han, which is about three miles away. And not far from the gate is the chief railroad depot of Seoul, at which one can get cars for Chemulpo to take ship for China, or go on the trunk line about three hundred miles north to the edge of Manchuria, or by an equal distance south to Fusan, where a night's ferry over the Strait of Korea will put you in Japan.

We passed many soldiers on our way down this road. There were cavalry on horseback crowding the Korean traffic off to the side, and now and then a company of infantry, dusty and tired by their long march from the interior. We went by scores of bullocks loaded with fuel, great bundles of evergreen branches, a half ton in weight, which rose high over their heads and hung down at the sides almost to their feet. We passed carts of lumber, the boards tied up in rings, and bullocks drawing all sorts of building materials. There were many women, both Japanese and Koreans, and gorgeous big-hatted yangbans or Korean nobles on foot. I remember one who dashed by me riding a bicycle. His long pink gown floated out on the air, his black hat wobbled and his fat feet of padded cotton went up and down on the pedals.

Japan's Military Concession.

We went fully two miles before we reached the limits of the military concession. Here the street car line branches off and goes on under the railroad to the right, making its way down to the river. The whole road leads straight on through the new city. At the right is a large drill ground where several regiments of troops could exercise at one time, and above it are hills spotted with grave mounds so thick that they seem to be sown and grown as a crop. From here on for several miles on both sides of the road all the land has been granted to the Japanese. The area covers thousands of acres, and it is some of the most valuable land in the vicinity of Seoul. It originally belonged to the emperor, but he sold it to the Japanese for less than 250,000 gold dollars. The sale has been much criticised by the Koreans, who claim that the ground was worth several millions and that the sale was a forced one. Nevertheless, the Japanese government has now a clear title to it, and is exploiting it in much the same way that the Russians built their new town of Dalny at the end of the Manchurian railroad, which is now owned by the Japanese. In the shuffling of the international cards for the stake of Korea there is a bare possibility that at some time in the far future Yong-san may be one of the priezs which will go into the hands of Russia, taking the place that Dalny has now in the hands of Japan.

At the present Yong-san is about the liveliest Japanese spot in Korea. A great deal of grading is being done. Korean laborers, under the direction of Japanese overseers, are cutting down the hills and leveling the valley. They are putting up dirt walls about some of the big buildings, which look almost like fortifications. They are making drains and digging foundations. A system of waterworks has been put in which supplies the military city with pure water from the mountains near by, and wide streets, crossing one another at right angles, have been laid out, covering almost the whole territory. Roughly speaking, I should say there is room on the site for for seevral hundred thousand people, and it is believed that all the ground not devoted to the military establishment will be taken up with Japanese buildings.

Japan's New Barracks.

The new barracks now going up, many of which are already completed show that the Japanese intend to keep a large military establishment in Korea for a long time to come. They now have 20,000 men in different parts of the peninsula, and several thousand of these are here in Seoul. There are a score or more of great two-story brick structures already erected, which are now occupied by the men, and there are similar buildings for the subordinate headquarters filled with officers and barracks for non-commissioned officers in every branch of the service.

I doubt if Uncle Sam houses his troops anything like as well the Mikado does these young Japanese. The barracks are as substantially built as as any structure in the United States. They are well designed and well lighted, and every man has the right amount of space. They are heated by Russian stoves which are built up in the corner of each room. The soldiers sleep on spring beds, they take hot baths once a day and their food is carefully prepared.

During my stay I went through the kitchens of some of the establishments. It was about time for dinner, and great tubs of steaming rice had just been taken from the fire, while fried fish and vegetables were being ladled out on to plates of polished aluminum. In order to make the camp equipment as light as possible all the dishes used by the men are of this metal, the rice for each being served in an aluminum box of about the size of that which holds 100 cigars. Each man gets such a box of rice at every meal and a fixed supply of fish, vegetables and sauce, which is varied in character from day to day. The food was put up in such portions on trays each of which carried twenty-four plates and rice boxes, and these trays were carried by men to the dormitory nearby. All of the Japanese soldiers now wear European shoes. I judge they still find them uncomfortable, however, for I noticed at the entrance to each barracks great rows of these shoes, outside in the halls, and that the men, as they jumped from their couches and stood at attention as I passed with their colonel, were in their stocking feet.

Homes for Officers.

The barracks I have referred to are built around a great parade grounds, at one side of which is an office building where I was presented to the commanding general of the division. This building must cover a quarter of an acre and it was filled with clerks who were working away. Up another street many other large brick buildings are rapidly rising and on the sides of the hills overlooking this magnificent country, are long lines of cottages built in Japanese style, but much warmer than those of Japan. They are the homes of the colonels, captains and lieutenants.

The palace of the commander-in-chief, referred to at the beginning of my letter, is still farther on beyond the army headquarters, which in size correspond somewhat to that of one of the great government buildings at Tokio. This residence is being constructed of steel and red brick, it is of three stories and basement, and is by far the finest building ever begun in Korea. It will have every modern improvement and will be one of the wonders of this part of the far East. The building is still in the scaffolding, but the walls have been finished and it is about ready for roofing. It will probably be completed during the year. The commander-in-chief of the army of Korea, is lower in rank than the resident general, and I am wondering what the home of the latter will be when it is constructed. It may be it is to add to the impression that prevails here as to the mighty power of the Japanese army, and be a living evidence of its unlimited riches and strength.

The Mikado's Military Fist.

The hand of the Emperor of Japan in his ruling of Korea is for the present, nominally at least, gloved with velvet. Inside the glove, however there is a fist of iron, and the man who represents this is General Hasegawa, one of the most famous soldiers in his majesty's army. He is commander in chief of the garrison in Korea, and as such has entire control of military affairs on the peninsula. He believes in ruling the people with a strong hand, and if he had his will, he would, I am told, institute a military directorship and stop what many call the humanitarian foolishness now carried on by Uncle Sam and the Emperor of Japan in trying to train up weak and corrupt nations to the ability of governing themselves. General Hasegawa would not acknowledge this to the public. He is here as the assistant of Prince Ito, and as such must do as Prince Ito says. There is no doubt, however, but that he believes in a strong hand being used in Korea, and that he is able to wield it if the same should be ordered.

The main object of my visit to Young-san today was to meet the general and have a talk with him. My audience took place in his headquarters, and we drank tea and smoked cigarettes as we chatted together through the medium of Mr. Kouroda.

Gen. Hasegawa is now fifty-nine years of age. He began life in the army at the age of twenty-two as a major, and rose to be a colonel six years later. He was a major-general in 1886, and he commanded a brigade in the Japan-China war. At that time he was noted as a hero of Port Arthur, and in the war with Russia he again won his spurs as the commander of the imperial guardsmen under General Kuroki, leading it to victory at the Yalu and the battle of Liaoyang. He was made a general in 1904, and after that battle was appointed head of the army in Korea. He is now practically at the top of the Japanese military regime, and should there be a war with any foreign power the probability is that he would be in command.

Gen. Hasegawa looks like a soldier. Indeed, he reminds me much of our Gen. Lawton, who was killed in the Philippines. He has the same slender figure, the same erect bearing and an eye which is equally piercing. He has a jaw of iron, high cheek bones and a high, broad, but rather receding, forehead. His eyes are almost straight and his nose is rather larger than that of the ordinary Japanese. His face is full of red blood, but it is bronzed from his life in the field. He wore today his military uniform, which is the color of khaki, and on the breast of his coatI noticed eight silk loops, upon which he hangs his principal decorations of honor when he appears before the Emperor and upon state occasions.

Gen. Hasegawa Talks.

During our conversation, which lasted for perhaps half an hour, I asked the general to tell me something of the military situation in Korea. He replied that the situation was steadily improving and that the rebels, who are such on patriotic grounds, had practically disappeared. Said he:

"The actual conditions of Korea as to law and order have never been known to the world, and they have not been appreciated even by the government at Seoul. For generations bands of brigands have infested the mountains, and have come out now and then to prey on the people of the lowlands. They have held up the farmers and blackmailed the villages. If they were informed upon the informer was sure to meet death sooner or later, and the village might be burned as a matter of vengeance. These bands are generally without organization, but there is one chief who has many followers. His home is in the mountain fastnesses between here and Gensan. We know who he is, and hope to catch him. At present our soldiers are after these robber bands. They are so scattered that it will take a long time to wipe them out. And we believe that there are thousands of them. When we have disposed of them the country will be practically quiet.

Korea's Idle Officials.

"Do you mean that the Koreans will stop fighting and go to work?"

"Not altogether," was the reply. "They will stop fighting, but many of them will never work. This is so far as the present generation is concerned. The nobility have considered it disgraceful to work, and the hangers-on of the official circles who have lived by squeezing the common people are the most difficult element we have now to deal with. We have tried to give them work, but they will not take it. I asked one of the missionaries how he would settle the question. He replied that he did not think they could be made to labor and that the trouble would continue until they died off and gave the workers a free field for themselves. At present the brigands are being recruited from this idle class. They fight not so much on grounds of patriotism as because they will do nothing else."

Korean Soldiers.

"What will Japan do as to the soldiers of Korea? Will it train the boys here so that they may form a part of Japan's army of the future? The Koreans number about 15,000,000, and if they will fight they will make quite an addition to your already large army." The general laughed as he replied:

"I should not encourage such a plan and it it is not in accordance with our scheme for bringing about the independence of Korea under Japanese protection. The Korean soldiers might do well enough in the rear, and we could use them for the heavy work of our military operations as transports and laborers. We would not dare put them at the front."

"How about the charges that your soldiers are oppressing the people and killing them without cause?"

"There is no truth in such statements," said Gen. Hasegawa. "We have to be severe in our treatment of the rebels in order to maintain peace and keep the unruly element in check. Waris a serious matter, and such conditions have to be handled in a serious way. Otherwise we could do nothing with the country. We wipe out the insurgents when they are found, and it may be that when we are misinformed as to who are insurgents some innocent men may be killed. At present we are using many Koreans in our police force, and the pro-Japanese Koreans are aiding us to put down the rebellion."

"Is it true that a band of your soldiers recently killed twenty such Koreans, supposing them insurgents?"

"I know the case to which you refer," said Gen. Hasegawa. "We are not yet sure whether those people were insurgents or not. The killing occurred in a part of the country where there were bands of rebels, one of which contained about thirty-five. Our troops were on the track of that band and had been informed that it was in a certain inn. The officer in command caught one man coming out and he had papers on him showing that he was an insurgent. He then ordered those within the building to come out or he would shoot. They did not reply and he commanded his soldiers to fire. Upon going in later twenty were found dead. We still believe that they were largely insurgents. They certainly should have answered when the soldiers ordered them out."

"Is not Korea a difficult land to police?"

"Yes, exceedingly so. The country is covered with mountains. There are no roads whatsoever over which troops can be marched. The only routes from one place to another are bridle paths, which become streams and rivers whenever it rains. There are practically no bridges and the country is so poor that it is difficult to provision the troops except by carrying food everywhere with us. Another annoyance to which the men are subjected is the universal presence of vermin, owing to the personal uncleanliness of the people. There are lice and bugs of all kinds, and it is almost impossible for the troops to keep themselves free from them."

I here asked the general as to the health of his troops. He replied that it was excellent and that the troops had not had the fevers, dysentery and smallpox, so common among the Koreans. He said the men were well cared for, and I complimented him on the healthful arrangements of his new barracks, saying that Japan was leading the world in matters of military sanitation, and that the low death rate from disease among the Japanese troops in Manchuria had been less than that of any great war in the past. The general acknowledged that this was true and significantly added:

"We Japanese do not believe that a soldier should die in his bed."

I then broached the subject of Russia, asking the general whether he thought there would be another war later on and whether he would build fortifications along the northern borders of Korea. He replied that he would not and that such fortifications on the frontier would be contrary to the treaties between the two countries. As to another struggle with Russia, he would not answer, saying that he hoped there would be peace between the two nations from now on. He said Japan did not want trouble with any one, but that if war came she would have to do what she could.

"We must fight just whenever our honor is at stake. There are occasions when to live without fighting would be to suffer more than to die."

I then asked, "What about the charge that you are preparing to fight America?"

To this the general semi-facetiously replied:

"You people must consider us very war-like to think we want to fight you. Indeed, we would like to live a while yet."

With that we both laughed and the interview closed.

Her Adorer—May I marry your daughter, sir?

Her father—What do you want to marry for? You don't know when you're well off.

Her Adorer—No; perhaps not, but I know when you're well off.—London Mail.
